

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The abstract has been amended forming one paragraph and avoiding legal phraseology.

Applicant submits that the abstract is now in proper language and format.

Claims 17, 19-26 and 28-32 are pending in this application. Applicant has amended claims 17 and 26, and has canceled claims 18 and 27. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim 17-32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regard as the invention. The formalities noted in the Office Action have been addressed in the amendments to the claims 17 and 26 in which the phrases “for example grapes” has been canceled for clarity only. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 26 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 3,913,798 to Allen. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Specifically, claim 26 has been amended to include features originally disclosed by claim 27. Claim 27 was not rejected based on Allen alone, thus the rejection is considered moot.

Claims 17-32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over British Patent Application 2,189,205 in view of Allen. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 17 has been amended to include features originally disclosed by claim 18. As recited in claim 17, the screw-feeder arrangement has a variable pitch increasing along a conveying direction of the fruit or vegetable products. Method claim 20 recites that the screw-feeder arrangement has a variable pitch increasing along a conveying direction of the products.

Providing the screw-feeder arrangement with a pitch that increases towards the outlet zone, it is possible to pick up from the regions of the hopper device near the outlet zone a

quantity of product that is greater than the quantity picked up from the regions of the hopper device that are farther from said outlet zone. In this way, accumulation of the products in the hopper device near the outlet zone, and the 'bridge' effect are avoided. Furthermore, non-traumatic treatment of the fruit and vegetable products is ensured, so that the products are not subjected to excessive pressure or to cutting actions.

The British Patent Application discloses a screw feeder arranged within a hopper and does not disclose a screw feeder with a variable pitch.

Allen discloses a screw-feeder arrangement having a variable pitch. However, Allen discloses that *the grooves 21 ... have finer pitch toward the exit end* (Allen, column 3, lines 42-43).

Therefore, Allen patent does not make up for the deficiencies noted above with regard to the British Patent Application. That is, neither the British Patent Application nor Allen provides any suggestion to modify the British Patent Application screw feeder to include the claimed screw-feeder arrangement having a variable pitch increasing along a conveying direction of the fruit or vegetable products.

Furthermore, the screw-feeder arrangement of Allen does not have a suitable surface for conveying fruit and vegetable products, but only seed. In fact, the screw-feeder arrangement of Allen comprises rollers 2A, 2B and control guides 14A, 14B in which the *action of the rollers 2A, 2B in cooperation with the control guides 14A, 14B, is found to maneuver the seeds 17 into a single-file formation* (Allen, column 3, lines 14-17).

With respect to dependent claims 19-25 and 28-32, Applicant submits that these claims are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency on allowable independent claims 17 and 26.

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In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are patentable over the art of record and that the application is in condition for allowance.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable in order to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below. Prompt passage to issuance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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